OF THE OUTDOORS | GARY HOWEY

Wild Things: Morel 'Shrooms Whitetail Licenses At Custer

BY GARY HOWEY Hartington, Neb

Each spring, about this time, men, women and children are infected with an infliction, one where there's no known cure.

It's a strange infliction, one that shows up for only a short period of time when conditions are right, ending almost as quickly as it begun.

The cause of this infliction is a fungi known as morel mushrooms and once they start to appear, men and women will leave their home. jobs and family, heading for the river bottoms, island and hills in search of them.

What causes this infliction, is morels, which are found throughout our area, are easy to recognize, deli-

cious to eat, making them the most popular of all wild mushroom sought after in the upper Mid-

They're elongated with an off white to brown stem and a crown that's covered with white ridges and dark brown pits,

varying from off-white to gray in color. The easiest way to identify a morel is to look for a mushroom growing on the ground resembling a cone shaped

Gary

HOWEY

They appear in the spring when temperatures reach around 50 degrees, with the majority of them being found when temperatures hit the mid 50's.

How does one know when to start searching for morels, well, Mother Nature gives us several indi-

Old timers say that mushroom hunters won't need to start thinking about hunting until the oak tree buds are in the mouse or squirrel's

What, I can honestly say that I've never known anyone who's taken the time to measure a squirrel or

they are about half the size of your smallest fingernail. In our area, if you don't want to run down a mouse or squirrel and measure their ears, there are more

mouse's ear, but I've been told that

visual indicators to help us know when to start looking. If you have a lilac bush in the area, keep an eye on it, as when they're blooming, it's a good sign that you'll find morels, while indica-

tors include: when crab apple trees

start to bloom or around the week

of Mother's Day. Well, this year, the way the weather has been, if you wait until Mother's day, I'll bet the morel season will be over.



PHOTO: DUSTIN LUTT

Morels come in all shapes and sizes, with the many of those found in the upper Midwest varying from light brown to dark brown in color

midweek.

Some hunters like to be more scientific and use the almanac to figure out when morels will start to appear. It's said, if you look in the almanac, taking the average date for the last frost in your area and then add two weeks to that date, you should be pretty close to the peak morel season.

Moisture, sunshine along with warmer temperatures have a lot to do with when morels appear as a week of 55-60 degree daytime temperatures with no frost is gone or freezing temperatures at night will generally be a good time start looking for morels.

Along with warm temperatures, moisture is also important. Many mushroom hunters say that the best time to hunt for them would be after a rain, when temperatures are around 60 degrees with high humid-

Morels will appear in areas that will warm up quicker and retain heat longer such as sandy areas, south facing slopes or in fields that have been burnt recently.

One of the most asked questions pertaining to mushrooms is where do you find them?

The first morels are found on islands in the river, sandy areas and in fields with dead or dying trees.

My most successful hunt was years ago when they were removing trees that had grown along the river, converting the fields from wooded areas to cropland in fields that hadn't been planted vet as these fields

was loaded with them. The decaying roots from the old elm and cottonwood trees that had been grubbed out were ideal places for the morels to take root.

I've also found mushrooms around older trees that had been going down hill for several years, eventually dying. Mushrooms seem to appear around these dead cottonwood and elm trees about the

time that their bark starts to fall off. The first morel is always the toughest to locate as they blend very well with the forest floor and vegetated ground. Once you've

found one, take he time to kneel

where you find one you generally find a bunch. One thing is for certain when it comes to finding morels; there are no set rules as to where the morel might be found. Conditions change from day to day during the spring and a hillside that was barren Monday may get a rain shower or warmer temperatures, causing the hillside to be loaded with morels by

down, looking closely because

morels are like schools of fish,

My preferred method for locating mushrooms isn't real scientific; it's the old 'iwondering around aimlesslyî method, where I head back to the same general area where I'd found them in past years while picking my way through the vegetation until I spot my first one.

Once you've found them, it's not a bad idea to kneel down, changing the angle you're looking, allowing you to get a better view of the area as many times as morels will be just pushing up through the leaves and can be verily visible.

For years, morel hunters have hit the woods with bread sacks, ice cream buckets and other nonporous containers. Some seem to believe these things have lead to less morel mushrooms

Because mushrooms reproduce through spores, which need to be returned to the ground in order to grow and if they're picked and places in a solid container like those mentioned above, we may be denying the morels the opportunity to disperse their spores or to re-seed

In order to allow the morels to throw their spores, it's not a bad idea to use collection bags that are porous such as onion bags or some type of a bag that allows the spores

to be release back into the air.

Mushroom hunters or shroomers, the name given to those who hunt mushrooms in the south have their own language and in mushroom hunters' jargon, a bunch of morels is known as a imessî and once you've found a mess of mushrooms, you'll need to clean them up and figure out the best way to prepare them.

Start by splitting the mushroom in half from the top to the bottom and rinse them off over running water as the crooks and crannies of the mushroom will contain sand and possibly insects. Once you've rinsed them thoroughly, let them set in water for a short period of time, which helps to flush sand, debris or stubborn insects out of them.

You won't want to soak them in \water for an extended period of time, as they'll become spongy. Once you've got them cleaned, comes the best part of morel hunting begins, preparing and eating

There are numerous ways to prepare morels including, fried and in mushroom soup. My favorite ways to prepare morels is to fry them up in some type of batter.

If you have a favorite fish batter, it will work well, if not, one can me made by combining equal parts beaten eggs with milk and crushed up saltine or you favorite crackers.

After you've rinses them, let the mushroom drip off on a dry towel and then dip in the mixture made from the beaten eggs, milk and crushed crackers, coating them

Place the coated morel into a oan and cook in butter until crisp. Don't over cook them, as they'll dry

Like anything, morels are best when prepared fresh, but if you have a good mushroom hunting season and would like to preserve or save some of them for future use. mushrooms can be dehydrated or

Morel hunting is excellent ways to get outside and to not only enjoy the outdoors but to also enjoy one of the many bounties Mother Nature

This spring while you're out scouting for turkeys, walking along the creek, river or hillsides look around as morels can be found throughout our area and you never know where they might appear.

Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb.. is the President of Outdoorsmen Productions LLC, Producer/Host of the Outdoorsmen Adventures television series and the Co-Host of Outdoor Adventures Radio.

Nomen 20%

WOV Time

Thursday, April 26, 2012

Riverfront Event Center, Historic Downtown Yankton

Briefs: GF&P To Issue 10 Any

BROOKINGS (AP) — The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Commission is issuing 10 any whitetail and two any deer licenses in Custer State Park for the 2012 season.

Game officials say the season was added as a management took to reduce the population of whitetail deer in the park from a high of more than 800.

The number is currently around 650, so commissioners at the department's suggestion are eliminating the 35 one-tag antlerless

whitetail deer licenses for 2012. The season in Custer State Park will run Nov. 3-16.

Nebraska's Sunshine Bottoms Boat Launch Closed

LYNCH, Neb. (AP) — The Sunshine Bottoms Wildlife Management Area boat launch on the Missouri River in northern Nebraska will remain closed until construction is

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission says a new boat ramp and parking lot are being built and

boundary fencing is being installed. The area is about three miles

east and four miles north of Lynch in Boyd County.

Fishing Trips Offered On Red Lake Reservation

RED LAKE, Minn. (AP) - Starting this spring, the casino on the Red Lake Indian Reservation will offer guided fishing trips on some of reservation's smaller lakes.

The Grand Forks Herald reports (http://bit.ly/H6Ep0x) Sunday that the guide service won't include the tribal waters of Red Lake, but will include trips on more than 25 small lakes within reservation bound-

Darwin Sumner is outfitters manager at Seven Clans Casino, which is offering the trips.

Sumner says nontribal anglers have been able to fish the reservation's small lakes in the past, as long as they were with a Red Lake band member. But this is the first

time package trips are being of-

The trips will offer opportunities for anglers to catch everything from trout to bluegills to walleye.

N.D. Man Charged With Illegally Capturing Bald Eagle

GRAND FORKS, N.D. (AP) — A Minnesota man is accused in federal court of illegally capturing a bald eagle in North Dakota.

Authorities say Aaron Reiling, of Halstad, Minn., was trapping without a license and trespassing on private land near Hillsboro in December. A game warden discovered a bald eagle with one leg caught in Reiling's spring trap. A deer carcass had been illegally

placed within one foot of the trap. The eagle did not recover from its injuries and was euthanized on

A plea agreement in the case calls for a sentence of probation and a \$1,000 fine. Reiling is scheduled to appear in court on April 18.

DNR Tightens Size Rules For Walleyes On Mille Lacs

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — The Department of Natural Resources has tightened size limits for walleyes on Mille Lacs Lake for the coming sea-

Anglers can keep walleye less than 17 inches long, compared with 18 inches under last year's rules. As before, one walleye 28 inches or longer may be included in the fourfish limit. Any walleve between 17 and 28 inches must be released.

Mille Lacs is being managed for a walleye harvest of 500,000 pounds. The protected slot is meant to hold the take by sport anglers to 357,500 pounds. The tribal quota is 142,500 pounds.

The DNR says the new slot is similar to several other big walleye

Minnesota's walleve season is set to open May 12, though a move afoot in the Legislature would open it a week early.





JOIN US FOR A FREE EDUCATIONAL SEMINAR

Now I run and lift weights and simple tasks are not as taxing as they used to be - I have even hiked Harney Peak."

Bariatric Seminar by Michael Haley, MD, FACS Monday, April 16 • 7:00 P.M. **Best Western Kelly Inn** 1607 East Hwy 50, Yankton, SD

For information, call 605-996-5482.

With the LAP-BAND® System, you can finally take control of your obesity and lose your excess weight once and for all. The only thing you'll gain is a happier, healthier life.

- · Least invasive, safest surgical option
- · No stomach stapling or intestinal re-routing • Only adjustable surgical option for customized weight loss
- Completely reversible



2200 North Kimball, Suite 950, Mitchell, SD • 605-996-5482

Put your health - and your life - first



Doors Open 4:30pm

Dinner Served 5:00-7:00pm

Speaker 7:30pm at Dakota Theatre

Advance Tickets:

Booths Open 4:30-7:00pm

Elizabeth Hagen

Come Enjoy This

Year's Speaker...